Faster and higher standards

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PM: ECRL significant in improving country's transport sector

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BENTONG: The East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project is expected to be a game changer by offering a more modern, safe, and efficient transport network to the East Coast, says Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

The Prime Minister said the ECRL project was an important element to improve the country's transport sector and will provide better services to Keluarga Malaysia (Malaysian Family).

"This ECRL (passenger) service which has a (maximum) speed of 160kph is expected to reduce travel time from Kota Baru to Gombak to under four hours compared to the average seven hours by road, or up to 12 hours during festive periods," he said in speech at the launch of the first tunnel boring machine (TBM) for the ECRL here yesterday.

The project implementation, which costs about RM50.27bil, has reached a progress mark of 30% as of May this year, with full completion expected by 2026.

Ismail Sabri also urged the Transport Ministry to hold discussions with stakeholders to determine reasonable fares for the ECRL so that it can be similar to the KTM Bhd's ETS rates, which is seen as rakyat-friendly.

"The ECRL alignment will also connect with KTM services at three interchange stations namely at Temerloh, Pahang, as well as Serendah and Jalan Kastam in Selangor.

"The inclusion of the Serendah bypass for KTM as part of the ECRL project scope will complete the establishment of a national cargo hub or transhipment hub in Serendah.

"ECRL and KTM services will also form an integrated rail line connecting the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) and Penang Port, the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) and Kuantan Port, as well as Iskandar Malaysia and the Tanjung Pelepas port in the south," he said.

The government, he added, was informed by project owner Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd that a 50:50 joint-venture (JV) company was being planned to undertake ECRL operations to cover operating costs as well as the repayment of the ECRL construction loan from China's EXIM Bank.

"This JV will provide technical assistance and boost rail technological exchange as well as maintenance of the ECRL project in the long term," he said, adding that the project will also see the involvement of some 1,500 local companies consisting of contractors, suppliers and consultants.

"This is in line with the agreement made between MRL and CCCC (China Communications Construction Company) to appoint at least 40% local subcontractors and suppliers for the civil works of this project, estimated to be worth about RM10bil," said the Prime Minister.

"As of April this year, more than RM7bil worth of civil works contracts had been offered to local subcontractors and suppliers for the ECRL project in East Coast states," he said.

"CCCC also agreed to give special attention to the appointment of small contractors in Grade G1 to G3 in order to directly benefit them," he said, adding that a special committee has been formed to monitor the participation of locals and bumiputra in the project to ensure the effectiveness of qualified companies.

Ismail Sabri also pointed out that the ECRL project has the potential to produce more local experts and skilled individuals in the rail industry through the dedicated skills training programme (PLKI-ECRL).

"We urge local players to grab this opportunity to participate in the PLKI-ECRL training programme, which is expected to generate 5,000 new job opportunities for the youth in the East Coast," he said.

A total of 1,800 trainees will be absorbed during the construction phase of the ECRL, and the rest of the 3,200 trainees will be absorbed during the operations phase of the railway, added Ismail Sabri.

The Federal Government is confident that the PLKI-ECRL programme, which is implemented together with its partners such as Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara, Akademi Binaan Malaysia (Malaysian Construction Academy) and Universiti Malaysia Pahang, will produce more experts in the rail industry.

Watch the video
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